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the hearts and minds of Spirit-empowered  
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connect.”*

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## Introduction to the Journal

The purpose of the Journal of Biblical Pentecostalism is to bless the church with pentecostal scholarship from the faculty of Bridges Christian College. One part of the journal is exegetical and the other part is more practical in nature. The rationale for such a broad scope is so that there will be literature for the biblical researcher and the ministerial practitioner.

### Mission of the Journal

The *Journal of Biblical Pentecostalism* presents biblical exegesis, ministerial training literature, and research of church history through a Pentecostal hermeneutic.

### Goals of the Journal

This Journal has the following goals.

1. To present exegesis of the Scriptures with a Pentecostal hermeneutic to help the church understand the Bible and its theological principles.
2. To demonstrate the unity of the Scriptures through intertextual interpretation of the Old Testament and New Testament.
3. To apply Scriptural principles to a Pentecostal, practical ministry environment.
4. To present research of the roots and traditions of the Pentecostal movement throughout church history.

### Journal Categories

This Journal will present articles that are separated into the following categories:

1. Biblical Theology
  - This category presents interpretation of the biblical text with a Pentecostal perspective. Various themes and theological principles in the Old and New Testaments will be presented.
  - This section is primarily focused on research on the biblical text.
2. Spirit-Empowered Ministry
  - This category presents articles that provide guidance in modern-day, Pentecostal ministry topics.
  - The biblical text, historical concerns, and Pentecostal doctrines are taken into consideration. The emphasis in this section is on application of the biblical principles to Pentecostal ministry.

**The False Prophets and Tree Imagery in Matthew and Jeremiah:  
An Intertextual Relationship between Matthew 7:15-20 and the Jeremianic Message.**

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### 1. Introduction

There are several intertextual habits that Matthew portrays in Matthew 7:15-20. These habits demonstrate his consistent editorial work, and they further show his preoccupation with Jeremianic themes and vocabulary to show the failures of the Jewish religious leadership. Therefore, this paper will reveal the following two features of Matthean redaction as it relates to John the Baptist's message in Matthew.

First, Matthew 7:15-20 illustrates the author's proclivities to present phraseology and vocabulary from John the Baptist's message (Matt. 3:7-10) that specifically highlights the inevitability of judgment for the Jewish religious leadership due to their rejection of the Lord's messengers. For example, the tree imagery that Jesus used in 7:19 is the same in John's message of the baptism pericope (Matt. 3:10). The contextual placement of such phrases indicates that Matthew's narrative directed judgment warnings against the Jewish religious leaders. In addition, the "bad fruit" moniker of John's message (Matt. 3:7-10) was also applied to the Jewish religious leaders in Matthew 12:33.

Secondly, the language used in the text reflects Matthew's preoccupation with Jeremianic themes and language. Like John the Baptist's message, the image of trees being destroyed as a result of judgment is found in Jeremiah 11:16. Moreover, the warning against *ψευδοπροφητῶν* in Matthew 7 is thematically linked to the falsehood of the prophets and priests in Jeremiah 6:13. Thus, this paper will contribute to the rejected prophet motif in Matthew.

This paper will be presented according to the following topics: (1) an introduction to the discussion, (2) the common shared language between John the Baptist's message (Matt. 3:7-10) and Matthew 7:15-20, and (3) the shared language between Jeremiah's message and Matthew 7:15-20.

### 2. The Discussion Concerning the False Prophets of Matthew 7:15-20

In Matthew 7:15-20, Jesus warned his audience about false prophets who deceitfully mislead people. Jesus further explained that the way to recognize such prophets are by examining their spiritual fruit. Verse 19 further explains that "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."<sup>1</sup> Then in verses 21-23, Jesus further clarifies the type of fruit that is expected of true followers of Christ. In fact, verses 21-22 explains that not everyone who "prophesies" has a free pass into heaven, but only he who "who does the will" of the Lord in heaven. The question is who are the false prophets that Jesus is alluding to? Are they in his current context? Or is it in the *Sitz im Leben* or life setting of Matthew?

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible.

There are two primary views that this paper will examine regarding the identity of the false prophets that Jesus warned about in Matthew 7:15-20. One view proposes that the false prophets were false prophets in the *Sitz im Leben* of Matthew. Craig Keener affirms that Jesus labeled the religious leaders in Matthew as fruitless trees (Matt. 12:33; 21:19; 23:3), but he states “because his words in this context address prophets one suspects that Matthew wants his own generation to take notice.”<sup>2</sup> The lack of specificity of Jesus’ antagonists in this message certainly seems to imply a generalization of this warning in Matthew 7:15.

Another view argues that the false prophets whom Jesus warned about in Matthew 7:15 are religious leaders, specifically the Pharisees. David Hill argued for such an interpretation in his paper on the identity of the false prophets in Matthew 7:15-23.<sup>3</sup> The counter to such a view is that the Pharisees did not consider themselves as prophets.<sup>4</sup> A study done by Benjamin Sommer demonstrated that the prophetic gift was believed to have ceased by the time of the emergence of second-Temple Judaism.<sup>5</sup> In response to evidence in Josephus concerning prophetic leaders, Sommer argues that the texts from Josephus (C.E. 30-100) “shows only that prophecy existed on the eve of what many thought was the eschaton.”<sup>6</sup> Sommer’s evaluation of Josephus is warranted because the texts portray the supposed prophets as being deceitful and not legitimate. However, even though prophetic revelation was believed to have ceased by the time of Second-Temple Judaism, the texts do show individuals as being labeled as “false prophets.” One main example of this is in Josephus’s reference to an Egyptian rebel who caused the thirty thousand Jews to follow him into a battle with a Roman garrison.<sup>7</sup> Another example is in the case of a certain Theudas around C.E. 45-46, who according to Josephus, considered himself a prophet.<sup>8</sup> Theudas misled the people and it led to defeat by the Roman procurator Cuspius Fadus (C.E. 44-46).<sup>9</sup> Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz have highlighted some of these prophets who had eschatological messages like John the Baptist and Jesus, and who attempted to lead anti-occupation movements.<sup>10</sup>

Shaye J. D. Cohen explained that classical pre-exilic prophecy was understood to have ceased, and that interpretation of the Old Testament canon had become of primary importance to Second-Temple Judaism.<sup>11</sup> However, this does not mean that false prophecy in some form had

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<sup>2</sup> Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999), 251, <http://www.questia.com/read/119906880/a-commentary-on-the-gospel-of-matthew>.

<sup>3</sup> David Hill, “False Prophets and Charismatics: Structure and Interpretation in Matthew 7, 15-23,” *Biblica* 57, no. 3 (1976): 348.

<sup>4</sup> Hill, 343.

<sup>5</sup> Benjamin D. Sommer, “Did Prophecy Cease? Evaluating a Reevaluation,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 115, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 32.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>7</sup> Flavius Josephus. *The Works of Flavius Josephus*. Trans., William Whiston, (Auburn and Buffalo, John E. Beardsley, 1895), 261.

<sup>8</sup> Flavius Josephus, *The Works of Flavius Josephus*. Trans. William Whiston. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1957), 590.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 144-145.

<sup>11</sup> Shaye J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 127-129.

entirely ceased. According to Cohen, “The Jews of the Second Temple period still had to contend with the problem of false prophecy, but in great measure this problem was replaced by a new one: how was one to distinguish the true (that is, authoritative, canonical) books and the true (that is, correct) scriptural interpretations from the false?”<sup>12</sup> Thus, as in the case of Josephus, much time was spent on understanding the interpretation of the Old Testament prophets, especially regarding messianic expectation. As F. F. Bruce noted, many of these messianic expectations were centered around the idea of a militaristic messiah.<sup>13</sup>

### 3. Shared Language between John’s Message and Matthew 7:15-20

The shared language between John the Baptist’s message in Matthew 3 and Matthew 7:15-20 demonstrate that Matthew recapitulated themes in his Gospel. The use of the same idioms and phraseology directed against the religious leaders in throughout Matthew further shows a consistent theme of judgment on those who have failed to produce righteous fruit, and who thus lead people astray. This section will be presented according to the following points: (1) the fruit imagery in Matthew, (2) the fire imagery in Matthew, (3) *ψευδοπροφητῶν* in the Matthean context, and (4) Matthew’s concern with the religious leaders.

#### 3.1 The Fruit Imagery in Matthew

John the Baptist exhorted the religious leaders to “bear fruit in keeping with repentance.” Likewise, Jesus prescribed the recognition of spiritual fruit as the litmus test for understanding who is a false prophet and who is not in Matthew 7:16. Moreover, the religious are rebuked by Jesus for their lack of apparent fruit when they speak falsehood about him in Matthew 12:33, and when his authority was challenged by them in Matthew 21. Finally, in the parable of the sower (Matt. 13), Jesus explained that the one who “hears the word and understands it” will bear good fruit (specifically Matt. 13:23).

#### 3.2 The Fire Imagery in Matthew

Those who do not produce “good fruit,” according to Matthew’s Gospel, are subsequently harvested and thrown into the fire that is judgment. This image is presented in Matthew’s gospel via the message of John from the outset in Matthew 3:7-12. Speaking to the religious leaders, John warned of a coming judgment in verse 10. In fact, judgment was so imminent for the religious leaders that John stated that the “axe is already laid at the foot of the trees.” Leon Morris pointed out that the placement of the axe at the foot of the trees not only indicates that the trees will be cut down, but also that “. . .its source of nourishment will be taken away.”<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, Morris also noted that a tree in this condition is hopeless and is in danger of imminent judgment.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, the theme of judgment of the religious leaders, symbolized as

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 129.

<sup>13</sup> F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (New York: Doubleday, 1971), 133.

<sup>14</sup> Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1992), 60, <http://www.questia.com/read/126625310/the-gospel-according-to-matthew>.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

fruitless trees is introduced at the outset of Matthew's Gospel. This theme is carried over into Matthew 7:19 where "every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." This presentation of judgment by fire is used in six other Matthean passages (Matt. 13:40, 42, 50; 18:8; 22:7; 25:41). The image of the tree is absent from these later passages, but the picture of judgment by fire is still present. The verb that is used in these contexts, βάλλω (translated "casting" or "throwing") in its lexical form, is often used in Matthew in connection with judgment, and also according to Kittel results in "partly of expulsion from the community of salvation."<sup>16</sup> The judgment by fire is generalized to unrepentant Israel in Matthew chapters 13, 18, 22, and 25; however, Matthew 12:38-45 indicates that the religious leaders, who asked Jesus for a sign, bore a great responsibility for contributing to the rejection of the Lord's messengers. This is a theme that is also rooted in the Jeremianic message.

### 3.3 ψευδοπροφητῶν in Matthew

Matthew 7:15-20 presents the ψευδοπροφητῶν as representative of the religious leaders who were opponents of Jesus. This is primarily due to the fact that John the Baptist's message of judgment against leaders who have fruitless lives is thematically recapitulated by Jesus through his warning concerning false prophets in Matthew 7:15-20. It does stand to reason that false teaching and false prophecy would parallel each other in Matthew's mind. The present tense that the ψευδοπροφητῶν are ἔρχονται ("coming") implies that false prophets were already present. In addition, *Didache* chapter 11 also parallels the two when it states, "And every prophet who teaches the truth, if he does not do what he teaches, is a false prophet. 11 But no prophet who has been tried and is genuine, though he enact a worldly mystery of the Church, if he teach not others to do what he does himself, shall be judged by you: for he has his judgment with God, for so also did the prophets of old."<sup>17</sup> It is also key to see Jesus' teaching ministry through the Sermon on the Mount and how it contrasts with those who are misleading the people through their teaching despite their lack of spiritual fruit. For, in Matthew chapters 5-7, Jesus is seen as the true interpreter of *Torah*. Dale C. Allison's presentation of Jesus as a new Moses figure fits this mold.<sup>18</sup>

Harkening back to what was stated earlier, some dispute that the false prophets in Matthew 7:15-20 represented the Jewish religious leaders. Keener<sup>19</sup> believes that due to the presence of the term ψευδοπροφητῶν in the text, and because it is absent in other texts where the religious leaders are figured as trees, then Matthew 7:15-20 generalizes the warning concerning false prophets. Likewise, regarding the images that are used in 7:15-20, D. A. Carson explains that the evidence for the phraseology "is better interpreted to support the thesis that Jesus in his itinerant

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<sup>16</sup> Gerhard Kittel, Ed. and Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Trans. and Ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Volume I (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 527.

<sup>17</sup> Pope Clement I et al., *The Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Kirsopp Lake, vol. 1, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1912–1913), 327.

<sup>18</sup> Dale C. Allison Jr., *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

<sup>19</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 251.

preaching uses similar metaphors in a wide variety of ways.”<sup>20</sup> John Nolland recognizes that the language in Matthew 7:15-20 best fits how the religious leaders are presented in Matthew 16:6-12 and 23:23, but he further clarifies when he states, “But we should not in the first instance take the material here as an attack on the scribes and Pharisees. To do this would be to deprive it of its generality and in particular of its challenge to Christians, and yet more pointedly to Christian leaders.”<sup>21</sup> So while there is a connection of the ψευδοπροφητῶν with the religious leaders, the general teaching principle of Matthew 7:15-20 should not be neglected.

It is evident that Jesus adopted John the Baptist’s sayings from Matthew 3:7-12 in 7:15-20, however, it is also important to note how Matthew arranged his material for theological purposes. Matthew is well-known as a story telling Gospel. R. T. France explains that, “Whether on the small or on the large scale, then, there is plenty of evidence that Matthew, far from throwing his material together in a random manner, has carefully planned the shape of the different parts of his story.”<sup>22</sup> This has led many to subdivide Matthew’s narrative into a literary structure befitting his storytelling ability. One example of such a structure is B. W. Bacon’s “Five Books of Matthew” hypothesis that correspond to the five books of the Torah.<sup>23</sup> J. D. Kingsbury’s division centered around the phrase *apo tote* (“from that time on”) and the verb *archomai* (“begin”) is also significant.<sup>24</sup> According to Kingsbury, these phrases were used to signal different phases of Jesus’ life (Matt. 1:1–4:16; 4:17–9:34; 16:21–20:34).<sup>25</sup> Yet, the intentions of this paper is not to establish a new structure, but to demonstrate that Matthew arranged his material with theological and thematic intentions; and studies that have been done demonstrate that there is a sense in which Matthew did not do this haphazardly.

Jesus also warned his disciples of ψευδοπροφητῶν and of ψευδόχριστοι in the Olivet Discourse, specifically Matthew 24:24. Yet, this passage is different in its contextual purposes than the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7. In the context of the Olivet Discourse, the judgment narrative has been generalized to include πάντα τὰ ἔθνη (Matt. 25:32). Some could look at this passage and contend that the perspective that the ψευδοπροφητῶν in Matthew 7:15-20 were representative of Jewish religious leaders is untenable due to the use of the same term in the Olivet Discourse. However, it is the opinion of the author of this paper that the generalization of terminology in the Olivet Discourse also generalizes the term ψευδοπροφητῶν. This is due to three contextual realities.

First, in the Olivet Discourse, Jesus is speaking to his disciples and not to the crowds like he did in Matthew 7. A warning to his contemporary audience in the Sermon on the Mount concerning the Jewish religious leadership would fit the immediate context. By the time Jesus would have had the Olivet Discourse with his disciples, conflicts with the Jewish religious leaders would have been prevalent, and it should be remembered this was post-conflict with the religious leaders at the temple (Matt. 21:12-27). There would have been no need for Jesus to

<sup>20</sup> D. A. Carson, “Matthew” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Volume 8* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 190.

<sup>21</sup> John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2005), 336–337.

<sup>22</sup> R. T. France, *Matthew: Evangelist & Teacher* (Great Britain: Paternoster Press, 1997), 141.

<sup>23</sup> B. W. Bacon, *Studies in Matthew* (London: Constable, 1930), 82, 265-335.

<sup>24</sup> Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 8, <http://www.questia.com/read/122477008/matthew-structure-christology-kingdom>.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

recapitulate teachings concerning the spiritual fruitlessness of the religious leaders to his disciples.

Second, the fruit and tree imagery as representative of ψευδοπροφητῶν is curiously absent. Certainly Jesus often used this imagery when talking about recognizing falsehood elsewhere in Matthew, but why not here? Once again, this implies a different context that surrounds the ψευδοπροφητῶν.

Third, if Matthew 7:15-20 is to a general audience, then why did Jesus not warn about the ψευδόχριστοι in the Sermon on the Mount? The presence of the term in the Olivet Discourse implies that Jesus is specifically highlighting eschatological themes. This is not to say that those themes are not present in Matthew 7, but the Sermon on the Mount is specifically addressing the crowd and their ethics that are to be contrasted with those who do not do the will of the Lord. Kingsbury explains that the Sermon the Mount is where Jesus presented himself as the “Messiah of the Word.”<sup>26</sup> Thus, he is the ultimate teacher who can instruct on the Torah.

Thus, in light of the themes from John’s message in Matthew 3:7-10, and in light of the fact that those themes are recapitulated in Matthew 7:15-20, it is probable that Jesus understood the ψευδοπροφητῶν to represent the religious leadership. Although, one can certainly apply the principles of Matthew 7:15-20 to his *Sitz im Leben* and to the current church context.

### 3.4 Matthew’s Concern with the Religious Leaders

Matthew as a whole is very concerned with presenting the religious leadership in a negative light. Much study has been done on the conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees. Some would say that the Pharisees did not consider themselves as prophets, but when considering the identity of the false prophets, it is important to heed the words of David Hill who states, “it is not a matter of whether the Pharisees regarded themselves as prophets or not, but of how Jesus (or Matthew) might have designated them!”<sup>27</sup> Thus, this paper will proceed to show how the religious leaders are a focal point of Matthew’s Gospel.

First, Matthew references the Pharisees and Sadducees more than the other Synoptic Gospels. For instance, Matthew mentions the Sadducees 80% more than Mark and Luke do.<sup>28</sup> Likewise, Matthew mentions the Pharisees 13% more than Luke and 28% more than Mark.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, in each case, Matthew presents an overtly negative outlook of the religious leadership.

Second, Matthew specifically targets the religious leadership with judgment messages. For example, in Matthew 3:7-12, Matthew presents John’s message of judgment as being pointed at the Pharisees and Sadducees. By contrast, Luke presents John’s message of judgment against the crowds (Lk. 3:12-13). The crowds in Luke’s baptism pericope have “soldiers” and “tax

<sup>26</sup> Kingsbury, 18.

<sup>27</sup> Hill, 343.

<sup>28</sup> For percentages, see Kurt Aland et al., *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th Edition (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012). Passages where the Sadducees are mentioned are the following: Matt. 3:7; 16:1, 6, 11, 12; 22:23, 34; Mk. 12:18; Lk. 20:17.

<sup>29</sup> Passages where the Pharisees are mentioned are the following: Matt. 3:7; 5:20; 9:11, 14, 34; 12:2, 14, 24, 38; 15:1, 12; 16:1, 6, 11, 12; 19:3; 21:45; 22:15, 34, 41; 23:1, 2, 13, 15, 23, 25, 26, 27, 29; 27:62; Mk. 2:16, 18, 24; 3:6; 7:1, 3, 5; 8:11, 15; 10:2; 12:13; Lk. 5:17, 21, 30, 33; 6:2, 7, 11; 7:30, 36, 37, 39; 11:37, 38, 39, 42, 43, 53; 12:1; 13:31; 14:1, 3; 15:2; 16:14; 17:20; 18:10, 11; 19:39. See Kurt Aland et al., *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th Edition (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012).

collectors.” Thus, where Luke generalized his audience, Matthew specifically highlighted the religious leaders as recipients of the message of judgment. Robert Gundry comments, “Matthew wants to carry on the theme of opposition by these Jewish leaders (who made up the two leading sects in Judaism)- a theme begun in his account of the nativity. Therefore they become particular objects of John’s rebuke.”<sup>30</sup> Mary Marshall in her study on the Pharisees in the Gospel of Matthew notes how Matthew often presented the Pharisees and Sadducees as being in league with each other (Matt. 16:1-12).<sup>31</sup> This was something that would be unexpected due to the two groups’ very different views.<sup>32</sup> This indicates that Matthew’s main concern is with emphasizing who the opponents of the Lord’s messengers were, and this included both the Pharisees and Sadducees.

#### 4. Shared Themes between Jeremiah’s Message and Matthew 7:15-20

Matthew 7:15-20 contains Jeremianic themes related to his message of judgment against the religious leaders. The existence of these themes demonstrate solidarity between the two messages. This will be presented according to the following sections: (1) Jeremiah’s influence on Matthew, (2) the fruit imagery in Jeremiah, (3) the fire imagery in Jeremiah, and (4) the false prophets.

##### 4.1 Jeremiah’s Influence on Matthew

Matthew has more of a preoccupation with the prophet Jeremiah than the other Synoptic Gospels. This has been demonstrated in Michael Knowles’s work, *Jeremiah in Matthew’s Gospel: The Rejected Prophet Motif in Matthaean Redaction*.<sup>33</sup> According to Knowles, Jeremiah was an influential factor in Matthew’s presentation of Jesus.<sup>34</sup> Knowles states, “Matthew uses Jeremiah traditions as a bridge between Christology and ecclesiology, linking the experience of Jesus and his first disciples with the experience of his own community.”<sup>35</sup> Mark F. Whitters has also noticed a Jeremianic influence on Matthew’s Gospel. In his article titled “Jesus in the Footsteps of Jeremiah,” Whitters states, “There are two other direct references to the Book of Jeremiah in the Gospel, one at the beginning of Jesus’ life (Matt. 2:17), the other at the end (Matt. 27:9). Taken together, these three references lie at strategic points in the narrative, and they hint at some thread that binds the life of Jesus to the memory of Jeremiah.”<sup>36</sup> Indeed, out of the Synoptic Gospels, Matthew is the only one to reference Jeremiah. In addition, in Matthew

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<sup>30</sup> Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 46.

<sup>31</sup> Mary Marshall, *The Portrayal of the Pharisees in the Gospels and Acts* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, 2015), 77.

<sup>32</sup> Cohen, 152-157.

<sup>33</sup> Michael Knowles, *Jeremiah in Matthew’s Gospel: The Rejected-Prophet Motif in Matthaean Redaction* (England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 310.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Mark F. Whitters, “Jesus in the Footsteps of Jeremiah,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 68, No. 2 (April 2006): 230. Accessed November 18, 2018. [https://www.jstor.org/stable/43725700?readnow=1&refreqid=excelsior%3Ab92c9e61f503f0e34c0f4d89d916c0e8&seq=2#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/43725700?readnow=1&refreqid=excelsior%3Ab92c9e61f503f0e34c0f4d89d916c0e8&seq=2#page_scan_tab_contents).

16:14, when asked by Jesus who the crowds said that Jesus was, the disciples responded, “Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.” Knowles points out that Jeremiah as one of the options is absent in Mark (Mk. 8:27-29) and Luke’s (Lk. 9:18-20) parallel of this pericope. This fact, along with the quotations of Jeremiah in Matthew 2:17-18 and 27:9-10, reveals Matthew’s redactional concerns related to Jeremiah. These concerns, according to Knowles, Matthew intentionally involved Jeremianic themes in order to emphasize a rejected prophet motif that his *Sitz im Leben* could relate.<sup>37</sup> Yet, for this paper, this research helps to demonstrate that Jeremianic influences are pervasive in Matthew’s Gospel; hence, this is the reason why one finds themes from Jeremiah’s message in Matthew 7:15-20.

#### 4.2 The Fruit Imagery in Jeremiah

Jeremiah and Matthew 7:15-20 both share a textual relationship through the use of the fruit imagery to describe one’s deeds. The Greek καρπός is used symbolically in both Matthew 7:15-20 and in the LXX of Jeremiah (Jer. 17:7-8). Indeed, John’s imperative to ποιήσατε οὖν καρπὸν in Matthew 3:10 is echoed in Jeremiah 17:7-8 where the one who trusts in the Lord is blessed and described as a tree planted by water, and who does not διαλείψει ποιῶν καρπὸν or “cease to produce fruit.” Likewise, in Jeremiah 6:13-19, the false prophet and the priest are highlighted for their falsehood. Jeremiah 6:13 states that, “from the prophet even to the priest everyone deals falsely.” On this, Charles L. Feinberg states, “The blame lay largely with the priests and prophets who held out false hopes to the people regardless of the way they lived. Those whose integrity should have been exemplary practiced deceit.”<sup>38</sup> Later in verse 19, the text states that the people, including the prophet and priests, will experience the “fruit of their schemes.” Once again, this has judgment implications. One other text that should be highlighted is Jeremiah 12:2, where the prophet wondered why the Lord allowed the wicked to prosper and allow them to “bear fruit.” There the phraseology is similar in the Greek to the other texts, ἐποίησαν καρπὸν. The theme then of bearing spiritual fruit is present in Jeremiah and echoed in Matthew’s Gospel.

#### 4.3 The Fire Imagery in Jeremiah

The fire imagery is also used in Jeremiah’s message concerning judgment against Judah. In Jeremiah, the image of fire is used in reference to the wrath of *Yahweh* (Jer. 4:4; 15:14; 17:4; 21:12), in reference to Jeremiah’s message given by *Yahweh* (Jer. 5:14; 23:29), and it is finally used in reference to Judah’s judgment (Jer. 6:29; 11:16; 17:27; 21:10, 14; 22:7). The Matthean phraseology of being “cast into the fire” (especially βάλλω) is absent from the LXX version of Jeremiah, the overall themes of fire as judgment is still present. Moreover, Judah is presented as an olive-tree that would be set on fire in judgment according to Jeremiah 11:16. Therefore, there is enough thematic imagery to make the intertextual connection between both texts.

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 94-95.

<sup>38</sup> Charles L. Feinberg, “Jeremiah” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Volume 6* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 422.

#### 4.4 The False Prophets in Jeremiah

The false prophets are representative of religious leadership in Jeremiah's message like Matthew 7:15-20. Jeremiah also references prophets who "prophesy falsely" (Jer. 5:31), and he also speaks of how both the priests and prophets operate falsely (Jer. 6:13; 8:10-11). In the LXX, Jeremiah 6:13 parallels Matthew 7:15 with its use of ψευδοπροφήτου for the false prophets. Furthermore, in the Temple Sermon, specifically Jeremiah 7:4, the people are commanded to not trust in the "deceptive words" of their religious leaders. R. K. Harrison explains that, "Jeremiah maintained that the priests had condoned, and even actively aided, the accommodating of traditional Hebrew monotheism to the pagan excesses of Canaanite religion."<sup>39</sup> It is evident that Jeremiah laid a lot of the blame on the religious leaders. Yet, Harrison continues by saying that, "The priests were supported in their illusions by a number of false prophets who were associated in some unspecified manner with the cultus (8:10-17; 23:9-40)."<sup>40</sup> Therefore, the priests and false prophets were presented by Jeremiah as being in league with each other. As was presented earlier, judgment was the destiny for the false prophets and for those who trusted in their words according to Jeremiah's message (Jer. 6:21-30; 7:32-34; 8:10-22). The theme of the misleading religious leaders, who are in league with the false prophets, provides a foundational connection between Jeremiah's message and Matthew 7:15-20. This foundational connection is echoed in the opposition of the religious leaders in Matthew.

#### 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper finds a thematic connection between Jeremiah's message of judgment against the false prophets and the ψευδοπροφητῶν of Matthew 7:15-20. The connection demonstrates the influence that Jeremiah has on the Gospel of Matthew as an underlying theme that reveals the nature of the message of judgment against the religious leaders. The following conclusions will be made based on this research.

First, the ψευδοπροφητῶν of Matthew 7:15-20 represent the Jewish religious leadership in accordance with the thematic progression of Matthew's assemblage of his material. It is not that this passage is not applicable to the church or Matthew's *Sitz im Leben*, but it fits his intentional arrangement that presents the message of judgment against the Jewish religious leadership as a result of their failure to produce good fruit. While the religious may not have considered themselves as prophets, there were figures in Judaism who, according to Josephus, were false prophets that led the people astray into losing conflicts with the Romans. Thus, it is not unlikely that Jesus considered the religious leaders as those who were in the same vein as a false prophet; moreover, it is certainly probable that Matthew presented the religious leaders in such a light if Theudas and the Egyptian existed during the composition of his Gospel.

Second, Jeremianic language, vocabulary, and themes are present in Matthew 7:15-20. This furthers the idea that there is a thematic connection between the two writers. Likewise, Matthew was clearly preoccupied with Jeremiah's work in the composition of his Gospel. This is demonstrated by his consistent use of Jeremiah, and the thematic echoes that are pervasive in his

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<sup>39</sup> R. K. Harrison, *Jeremiah and Lamentations: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 21, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 43.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

text. Indeed, one can see many echoes of Jeremiah's messages of judgment against the religious leaders in the message of John the Baptist in Matthew and also in Matthew 7:15-20. This is not by accident, but it shows the influence that Jeremiah's ministry had on the thinking of Matthew when he composed his Gospel narrative.